

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 25

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to congratulate John Furgess, Jr. of Nashville upon his election as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are pleased to specially recognize those courageous Tennesseans who have served this nation in time of war as members of the armed services and have subsequently risen to positions of national prominence as officers and activists in veterans organizations; and

WHEREAS, one such distinguished Tennessean is John Furgess, Jr. of Nashville, who, at the VFW's 105th national convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, becoming only the second Tennessean to hold that office; and

WHEREAS, born March 31, 1943 in Langley, Virginia, to Master Sergeant John Furgess, Sr. and Anita Nolan Furgess, John Furgess, Jr. was raised in Nashville and graduated from Father Ryan High School in 1961. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business from Middle Tennessee State University and graduated from the U.S. Army ROTC program at MTSU; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Furgess served on active duty with the Army Security Agency (ASA) from 1965-70, including a tour in Vietnam from 1967-68 in a Military Intelligence unit at the Americal Division headquarters in Chu Lai; he was awarded the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal and Vietnam Service Medal; and

WHEREAS, upon his return to civilian life in 1970, John Furgess joined the National Guard, retiring in 1993 with the rank of Colonel. Also in 1970, he joined VFW Post 1970 in Nashville, becoming a life member in 1974; and

WHEREAS, from 1970-80, Mr. Furgess served as Assistant Manager of the Mutual of New York Life Insurance Agency in Nashville; on February 1, 1979, he began writing a newspaper column on veterans' issues for the Westview weekly newspaper in Bellevue, Tennessee, called *Vet's View*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Furgess quickly rose to positions of leadership in the VFW, serving as Post Commander, District Commander, and, in 1978, Department (State) Commander, the first Tennessee Vietnam veteran to hold that office. He attended the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1979, and was elected a member of the VFW National Council of Administration for 1999-2001; and

WHEREAS, John Furgess's prominence in veterans' circles led to his appointment as Assistant Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs on June 1, 1983; he subsequently served under five commissioners during the administrations of governors Lamar Alexander, Ned McWherter, and Don Sundquist, before retiring on October 31, 2002; and

WHEREAS, on August 30, 2002, at the VFW's 103rd national convention in Nashville, Tennessee, John Furgess was elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the VFW, becoming only the second Tennessean to have been elected to that office; in August of 2003 he succeeded to the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief at the VFW's national convention in San Antonio; and

WHEREAS, as national Commander-in-Chief, Mr. Furgess has set a brisk pace, meeting with Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge to outline key VFW legislative issues and programs, visiting the wounded at the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Maryland, and leading the VFW in celebrating 105 years of service to veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, on a trip to Russia to meet with American and Russian officials in charge of the search for missing and unaccounted-for Americans from past wars, John Furgess met with key military members of the Defense Attaché and Political-Military offices, as well as with the U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Alexander Vershbow, who expressed his appreciation for the VFW's continued support of America's full accounting mission; and

WHEREAS, while in Russia, Mr. Furgess met with the senior members of the Combat Brotherhood, a Russian veterans' organization of 2.5 million members who participated in more than 36 wars and conflicts after the end of World War II; the Combat Brotherhood seeks to learn how to petition their government for veterans' health care and related benefits. The VFW and the Combat Brotherhood have issued a joint denouncement of international terrorism and called upon the leaders of the world's veterans' organizations to join in solidarity in opposing terrorism across the globe; and

WHEREAS, John Furgess met with U.S. Ambassador George H. Walker in Budapest, Hungary where he learned that two American aircraft crash sites from World War II have been located in Hungary and will be excavated in 2005 by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command to determine the fate of the crew members; he also paid his respects at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Italy; and

WHEREAS, John Furgess is a life member of the Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and the Retired Officers Association, as well as a long-time member of the American Legion and the Americal Division Veterans Association; he has served on the Veterans Employment and Training Service Advisory Committee of the U.S. Department of Labor; and

WHEREAS, his many accomplishments in both the military and civilian life aside, Mr. Furgess is fortunate to enjoy the love and support of his wife of 33 years, Alma Furgess; they are the proud parents of three married daughters, Amy Brown, Mary Catherine Conrad and Melissa Springs, and the doting grandparents of eleven grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and appropriate that this General Assembly pause in its proceedings to specially recognize the preeminent honor accorded to John Furgess via his election to the VFW's highest office; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we join with the members of Post 1970 of the VFW, the national membership of VFW, his family and many friends, and all the citizens of Tennessee in congratulating John Furgess, Jr. upon his election as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and offer him our best wishes for every success and happiness in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.